

thus christological knowledge is obtained through personal participation in the reality of Christ in the context of the worshipping community. He uses this as a basis for discussing the use of models, metaphors and concepts in christology. The final section deals with how christology influences the way Christians ought to live in the world. Gunton argues that if we take christology seriously then this will shape our understanding of the nature of God as one whose nature is most fully expressed in the act of self-giving. Thus the incarnation and death of Christ are not denials or dilutions of Christ's deity but the fullest expressions of it. Thus self-giving ought to determine a Christian approach to life. He briefly outlines the implications of this for a Christian approach to politics. The new epilogue deals with issues raised by pluralism, feminism, post-modernism and concludes with an examination of the role of the Holy Spirit in christology.

The first edition of this book deservedly received praise as a major contribution to christology. While in some ways the debate has moved on since then, it retains its status as a major contribution to christological reflection. An important dimension of its significance arises from Gunton's ability to combine sophisticated philosophical analysis with theological insight and exposition. Yet he does this in a clear and readable manner. His defence of the relevance of orthodox christology in the contemporary world is as significant now as it was when the book was first published. Certainly not all defenders of christological orthodoxy would accept his formulation, particularly his understanding of *kenosis* as an expression of the nature of God (an idea he has developed in other works), his argument that Jesus Christ's knowledge was not only limited but fallible and his acceptance of considerable variation and development in New Testament christology. One could also question the use of the categories of time and eternity, and immanence and transcendence to express the divide between creator and creature. Gunton is obviously aware of the problem here as he attempts to develop a new understanding of the concepts involved. The usage possibly reflects his attempt to speak to the contemporary context using its own categories.

While the new epilogue does grapple with some significant developments one wonders how recent developments would impact his argument in other areas. For example, would the developments in Pannenberg's thought

expounded in his *Systematic Theology* affect Gunton's analysis and critique of his christology. It would also have been helpful to have his response to the so-called third quest for the historical Jesus that emphasises theology and history but in most cases fall short of traditional christological orthodoxy. These are minor reservations, this is a book that ought to be read by all who have an interest in christology. Its careful analysis must be taken seriously by all who would contribute to contemporary christological debate.

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### ***Biblisches Ethos im Zeitalter der Moralrevolution***

**Georg Huntemann**

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### **RÉSUMÉ**

*Georg Huntemann, Professeur à Bâle et à Louvain, livre dans cette oeuvre volumineuse le contenu de ses cours et de ses recherches dans le domaine de l'éthique. L'importance de l'ouvrage réside dans la manière dont l'auteur se positionne face à l'histoire de la pensée chrétienne occidentale. Il est important à ses yeux que le christianisme se libère de l'emprise hellénistique dans les domaines suivants: la métaphysique, la conception des sacrements et celle de la hiérarchie. Mais, tandis que l'auteur de la présente recension relève avec louanges les propos d'Huntemann sur la technologie, il estime insuffisants ses développements sur les problèmes bioéthiques. Il regrette aussi que l'auteur reprenne, sans distance critique, des interprétations rabbiniques de textes du Nouveau Testament, dans cette contribution, par ailleurs très appréciée, au fondement d'une éthique chrétienne.*

### **ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

*Georg Huntemann, Professor in Basel und Leuven, hat mit diesem umfangreichen Werk eine Zusammenfassung seiner Vorlesungstätigkeit und Forschung auf dem Gebiet der Ethik vorgelegt. Die Stärke des Kompendiums liegt in der Art und Weise, wie sich der Verfasser der Auseinandersetzung mit der Geistesgeschichte des christlichen Abendlandes stellt. Wichtig ist für Huntemann, daß das Christen-*



*tum von seiner hellenistischen Entfremdung in metaphysischer, sakramentaler und hierarchischer Hinsicht befreit wird. Während der Besenent Huntemanns Ausführungen über Technologie lobend hervorhebt, hält er die Darstellung der bioethischen Probleme für zu knapp. Auch Huntemanns unkritische Übernahme rabbinischer Interpretationen des Neuen Testaments wird an dem ansonsten sehr begrüßenswerten Beitrag zur Begründung christlicher Ethik kritisiert.*

This massive handbook of Christian ethics is the result of 25 years of teaching ethics at the *Staatsunabhängige Theologische Hochschule* in Basel (Switzerland) and 10 years at the *Evangelische Theologische Fakultät* in Leuven (Belgium). A vast number of students on the European continent have experienced Professor Huntemann's personal and dynamic lectures on ethics. This impressive handbook could be considered as a crown on his many former publications, a kind of summarizing 'Deuteronomy'. It is full of references to former works, from as early as his 1968 work on technology to his more recent publication about Dietrich Boenhoeffer in 1989.

Huntemann covers a large portion of the ever-growing field of Christian ethics. He deals with the more fundamental questions of law, revelation and natural theology as well as the wide spectrum of moral conflicts such as politics, sexuality, euthanasia, abortion, technology, etc. It is written in a clear and rhetorical style, which is often found to be missing in other academic books. The simple fact of fluency and expressiveness is both the strength and the weakness of this work. For some it will undoubtedly be too argumentative and apologetic, for others this same outspokenness will make it relevant, challenging and courageous. This tension is inherent to Huntemann's personal approach. It is impossible in a short review to discuss the different ethical stands Huntemann takes on the wide variety of moral conflicts. Thus I prefer to focus on basic characteristics and the main contributions of this handbook.

The title of the work, 'Biblical Ethos in the Age of Moral Revolution', certainly covers the content. His method can be summarized in two words; 'challenge and response' . . . Every period in European history has a typical moral and intellectual challenge that compels the church to a firm and biblical response. A major contribution of this work is the vivid description of the moral revolution and its poisonous

attack on the Christian roots of Europe (*Das christliche Abendland*). Moral bankruptcy and secularization are placed against the background of Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Herbert Marcuse and many others. His knowledge of these writers is impressive and the quotations well chosen.

As a senior in German theology and philosophy, he takes the reader to the deeper roots of our moral revolution. It is revealing when he deals with enlightenment ethics in German idealism and natural ethics in German fascism. Crucial, according to Huntemann is anti-authoritative revolution and negative dialectics. It completely dissolves the center of biblical ethics, which is the concept of God as Lord and divine commander.

Within this emancipated context, Huntemann deals extensively with feminism and the depatriachisation of contemporary culture. Sometimes the reader wonders if this shift in morality is really as radical as Huntemann almost prophetically depicts but, nevertheless, the deep ideological roots are well revealed.

An important assertion of Huntemann is the Hellenistic estrangement of Christian theology. It is a metaphysical, sacramental and hierarchical alienation that demolishes the Jewish roots of Christian ethics. The tendency toward metaphysics and highly systematized dogmatics is at odds with the biblical worldview. Since our cosmos is an open one to a God who is ever acting, the prohibition not to make an image of God also includes the forbidding of making an image of the world. Huntemann even considers the loss of metaphysical systems in our postmodern culture as a deliverance. The source of Christian ethics is not a metaphysical system, but it is the Divine Commandment; the only basis is a revealing God. Jesus taught in essence *metanoia* towards the Thora. Christian ethics is not erotic, in the sense that the Greek verb *eros* seeks self-fulfillment, but is based on *agape*. Huntemann criticizes the erotic and aesthetic emphasis of the evangelical movement in our postmodern society. Religion becomes an object of personal development and beauty. *Agape* on the contrary is characterized by humble obedience to God's Word.

Huntemann's Divine Commandment theory provokes inevitable questions about the place of nature in ethical reasoning and its relevance for non-believers. The reader asks himself if Huntemann will stumble in the Barthian trap of an all embracing 'Wort



*Gottes'* and a fideistic ethics that loses its universal value. Here another characteristic of Huntemann's ethics comes to the forefront. He complies as much as possible with rabbinical and Jewish interpretations over against the Hellenistic alienation. The Halacha bases a more universal ethics on the covenant with Noah and its interpretation. In this sense, God's Word keeps its central place. Here the universal commandments against idolatry, murder and for a judicial system are given a status of 'world ethos' (*Weltethos*) and the basis for political activity. This theory can be considered an alternative to the Thomistic natural theology, Lutheran creation order or Abraham Kuyper's common grace. But it suffers from the typical disease of speculation.

Huntemann's very critical approach to Hellenism is contrasted with an almost naive acceptance of Jewish interpretations. This is not only clear from his use of the Halacha but also for instance by following Pinchas Lapide's interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount. This becomes even more important if we take into account a possible influence of Hellenism to the later Jewish traditions and their particular way of casuistic reasoning. Nevertheless, he gives an original contribution marked in a peculiar way by his former studies with the Jewish philosopher H. J. Shoeps.

Because of this outspoken rabbinical sympathy one wonders about Huntemann's attitude towards New Testament ethics. He is very formal in this matter and considers the ethics of the New and Old Testament as a unit. Huntemann's explanation of Torah (from the verb *jarah*—to teach) has a different connotation than the Greek *nomos* (law). It is above all instruction for salvation (*Heilslehre*) and *imitatio Dei* resulting in a harmony which reflects God's character. The ethics of the Messiah and the ethics of God's kingdom are not a denial of the Thora. In the suffering, death and resurrection of the Messiah, the Christian finds the spiritual power to live responsibly to God and the Thora.

Huntemann's ethics should not be categorized as legalistic and idealistic. In his discussion about moral conflicts, he emphasizes the deep impact of sin in our world and the impossibility to always find the right answers. Moral conflicts are a deep reality in this sinful world. There is no way to solve conflicts without any form of guilt. This makes the cross and grace so important in Christian ethics. When Huntemann deals with ethical problems he

mostly takes a classical conservative position. For example, human life begins with a high status from the moment of conception; homosexuality is perverse and against the order of creation. In his political ethics, Huntemann takes a stand against the focus on individual salvation and regeneration that is found in the pietistic tradition. The only relation to society is one of charity, not an active effort to change wrong structures. Although the state is a God given order that slows down chaos and demonic power, Huntemann criticizes with prophetic style the contemporary situation. Society is driven by the megapower of multinational and huge bureaucratic structures. Democracy, which has Christian roots, is under heavy pressure. Politics has lost its sense for the interests of the ordinary civilian and has become a highly technical game focusing on party and economic interests. Inspired by the Barmer declaration, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and with a deep hunger for justice, which is an integral part of Christian discipleship. Huntemann appeals for political preaching and activism as an integral part of Christian missions.

The strength of this monumental book is more in the field of theology, fundamental ethics, '*Geistesgeschichte*' and political ethics. It becomes more superficial when it deals with specific problems in biomedical ethics. For instance, Huntemann spends only eight pages on the therapy of genetic manipulation but an entire fifty pages is given to the discussion on the essence of technology. He opens his reflection with the fine nuance of 'technology' as reality (*Wirklichkeit*) but not truth (*Wahrheit*). Important themes such as the artificial man, sin, eschatology and ecology are all taken into account. Huntemann eloquently shows the characteristics of technological reductionism. In contrast to some other handbooks of Christian ethics and their tendency towards the pragmatism and biblicism in mind, Huntemann's work forms a real contribution to the moral debate. Because of its daily reality, technology should receive more attention in theology and ethics. However, technology is not 'truth' because it can't overcome the deep brokenness of this world. Although very few readers will read this book with an overall agreement, Huntemann's response to contemporary problems is a challenge for the evangelical mind.

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